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ABSTRACT

One of the problems of the English language is that individual words can often convey such a breadth of meaning that people often find themselves speaking past each other. The jargon of the environment is not immune. The words included in this publication are some of those more basic to the understanding of the environment. Definitions offered here are intended to help understanding of the words themselves, understanding of other people, and the understanding of the environment as a whole. Illustrations are included in such a manner that the pages could be used as mini-posters, story starters, and motivators of student interest. Included in this guide are the definitions of 24 environmental terms on separate pages. (CW)

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ENVIRONMENTAL TERMS

THE BASICS

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Environmental Terms--

The Basics

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INTRODUCTION

We all use words and often bandy them with a freedom that assumes others think of them as we do. One of the problems of the English language is that our individual words can often convey such a breadth of meaning that we may be speaking beyond each other. The jargon of environment is not immune. The words included in this publication are some of those more basic to our understandings of environment. We offer their definitions here to help our understandings of the words themselves, to help our understandings of each other, and to begin our understandings of the environment as a whole. We include illustrations so that the pages of this publication might serve as mini-posters, story starters and motivators of student interest.

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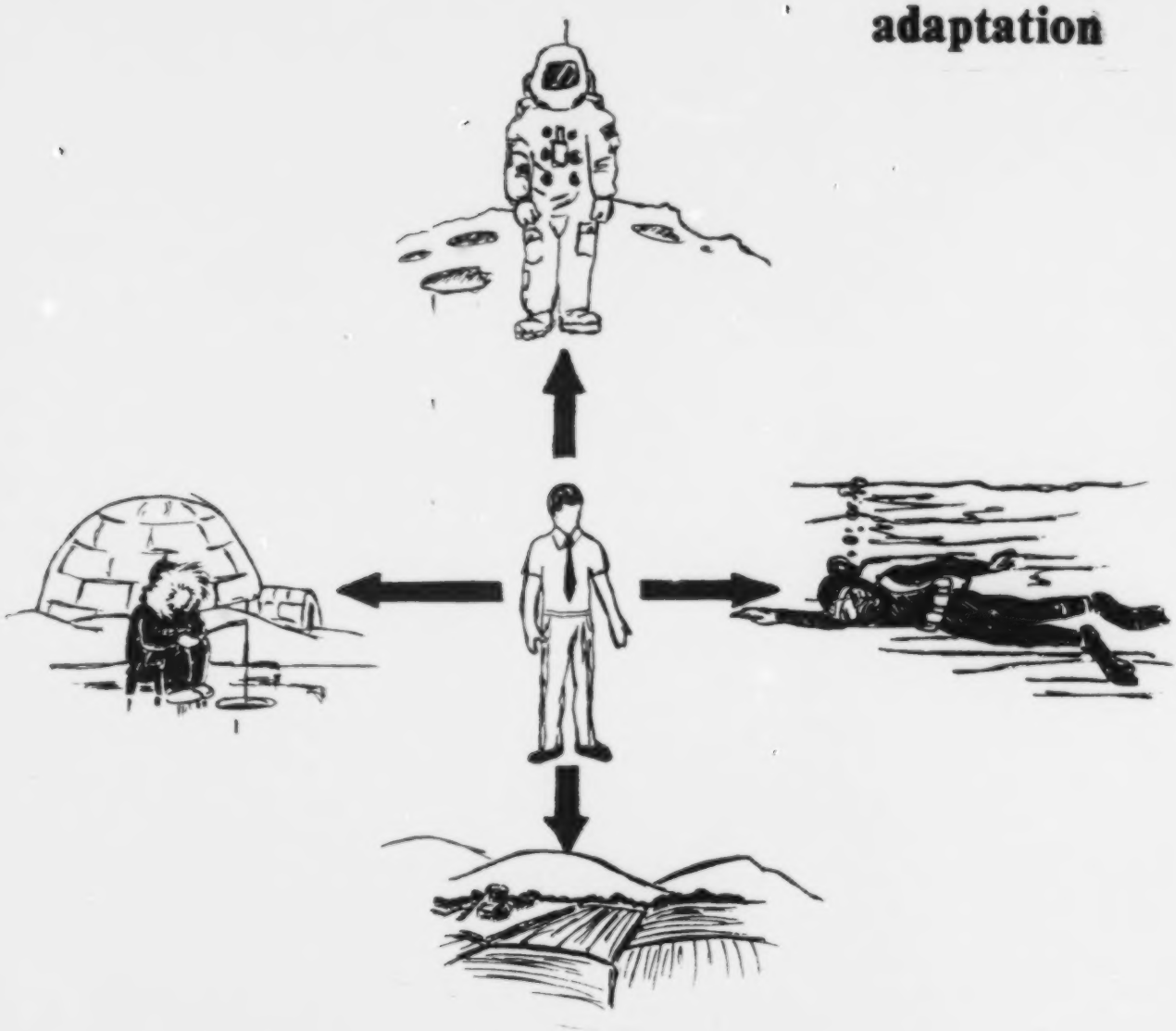
adaptation

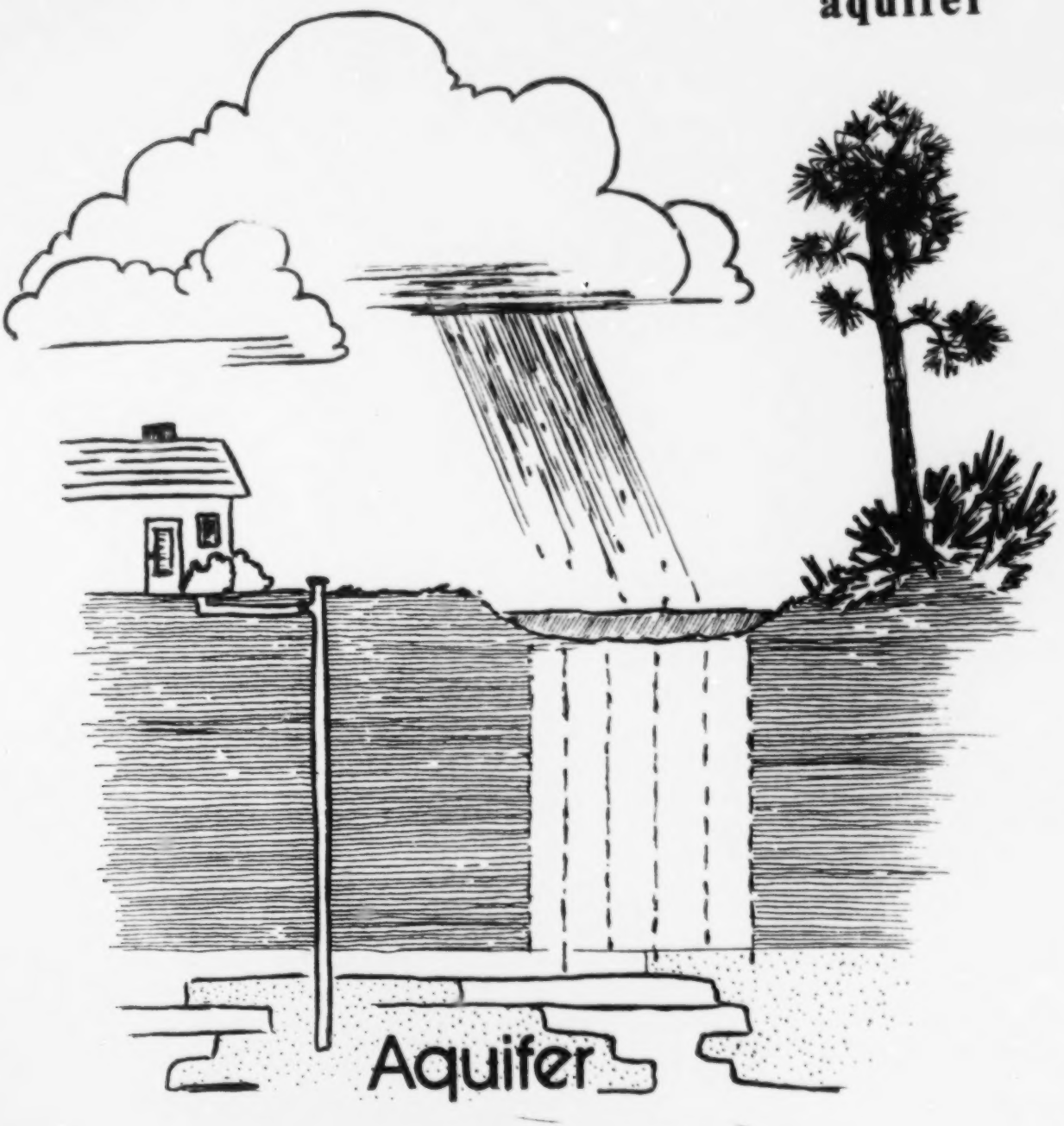


adaptation - a change in the structure or behavior of an organism that enables it to adjust to a changing environment.

adaptation - the process of making adjustments to the environment. For example, forests develop only where soil types, moisture, and sunlight are balanced to the proper degree. Desert plants have made adjustments so as to be able to live under intense sunlight, on poor quality soils, and with much reduced water supply.

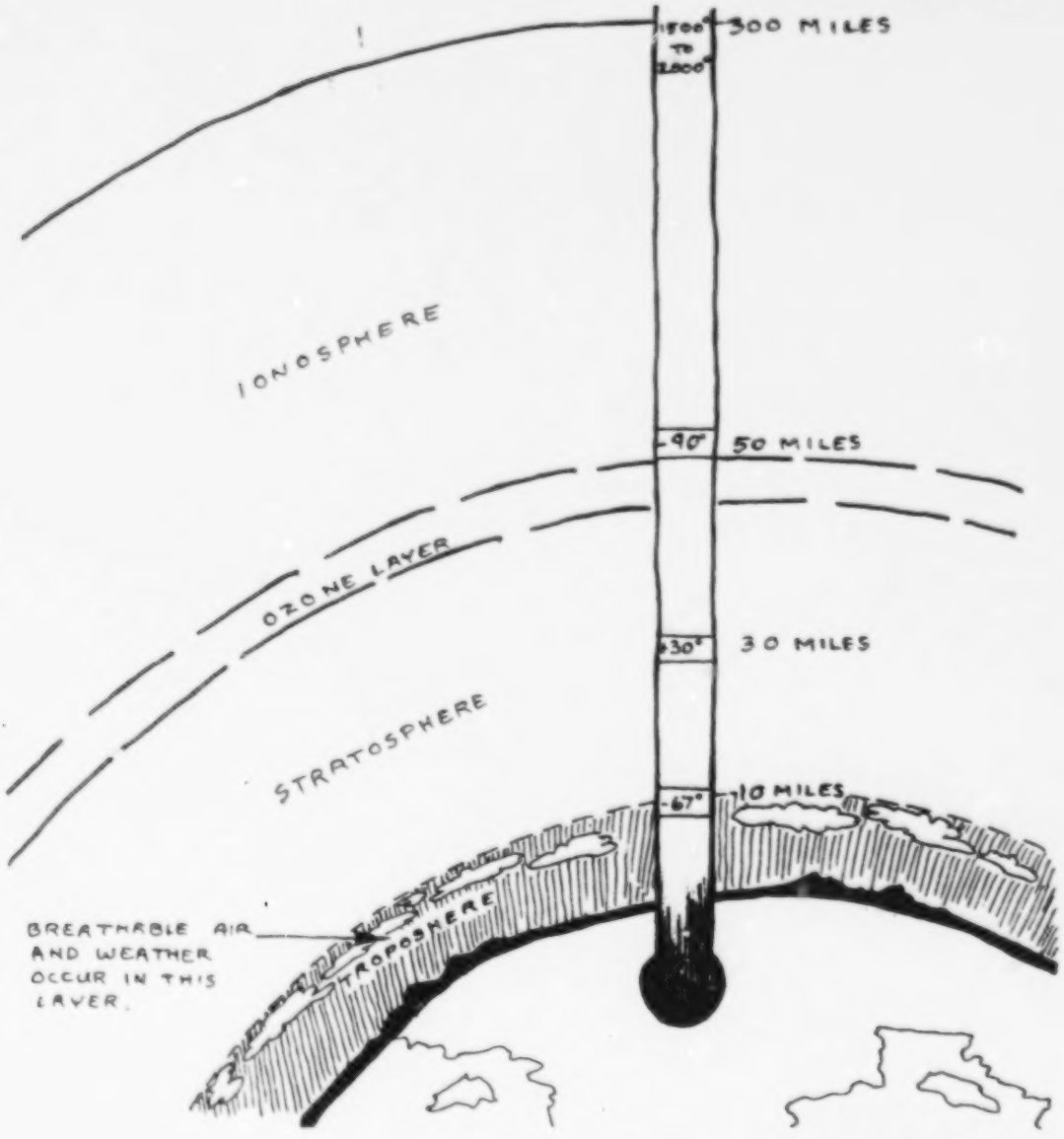
Taken from project WILD

aquifer



aquifer - a natural underground water storage area. This underground geologic formation collects and stores water. These water supplies are very important for our fresh water needs.

atmosphere



atmosphere - the thin layer of air that surrounds the earth. Without the atmosphere, there would be no life on earth, for it contains the oxygen, carbon dioxide and other chemicals for life. The atmosphere generates weather and climate and protects all living things from the sun's harmful ultraviolet light.

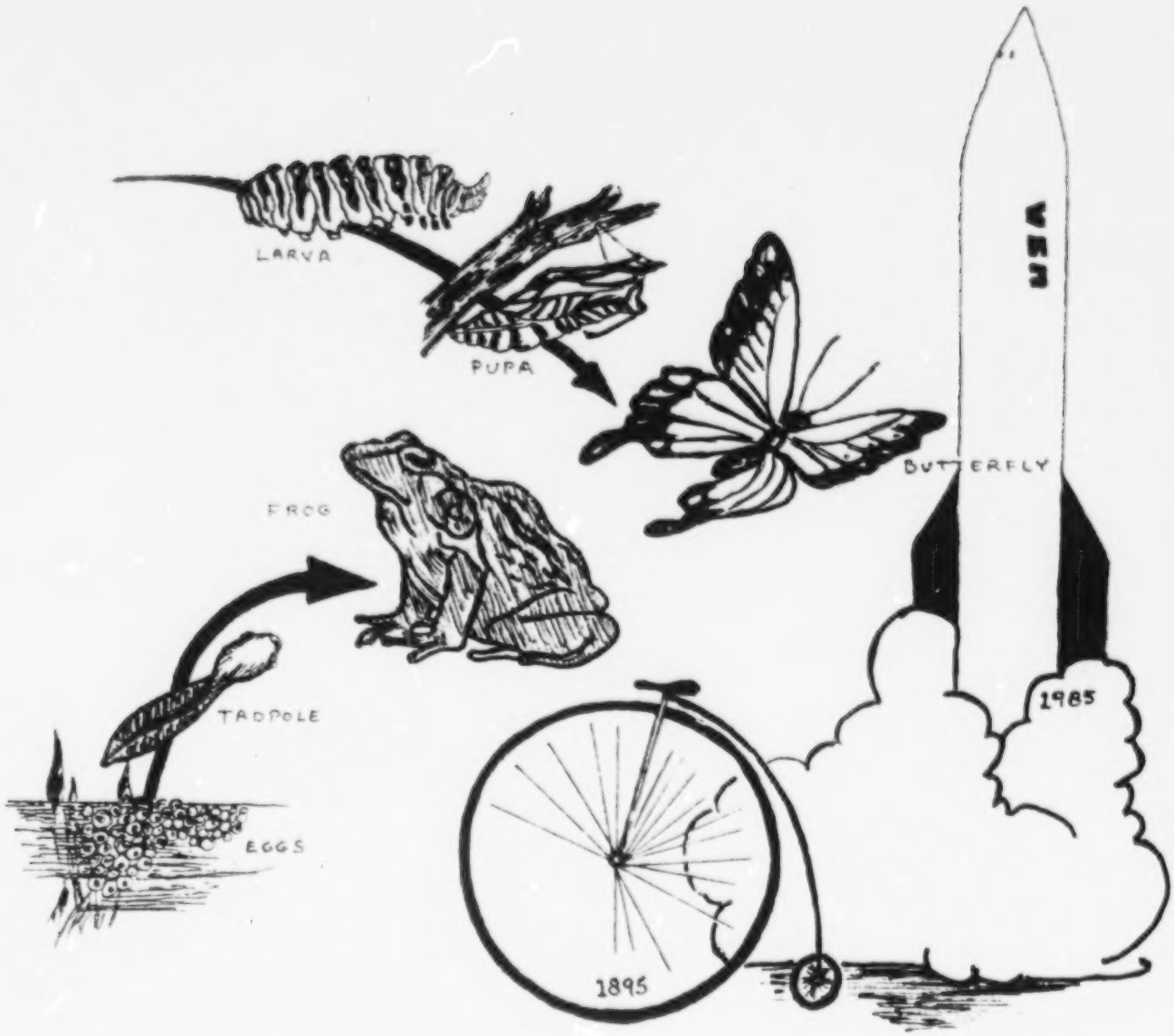
carrying capacity

carrying capacity - the highest number of plants or animals that can exist in an area without making that area unsuitable for them to continue living.

Carrying capacity - a wildlife management term for the total number of any species that a given area of habitat will support at any given time; the ability of a given unit of habitat to supply food, water, cover or shelter, and necessary space to a wildlife species; the number of organisms of a given species and quality that can survive in a given ecosystem without causing deterioration; the largest population the unit can support on a year-round basis, or during the most critical season. Carrying capacity varies throughout the year. The population number varies from year to year, dependent upon conditions within the habitat such as rainfall, competition from domestic animals, etc.

*Taken from project WILD

change



change - to become different.

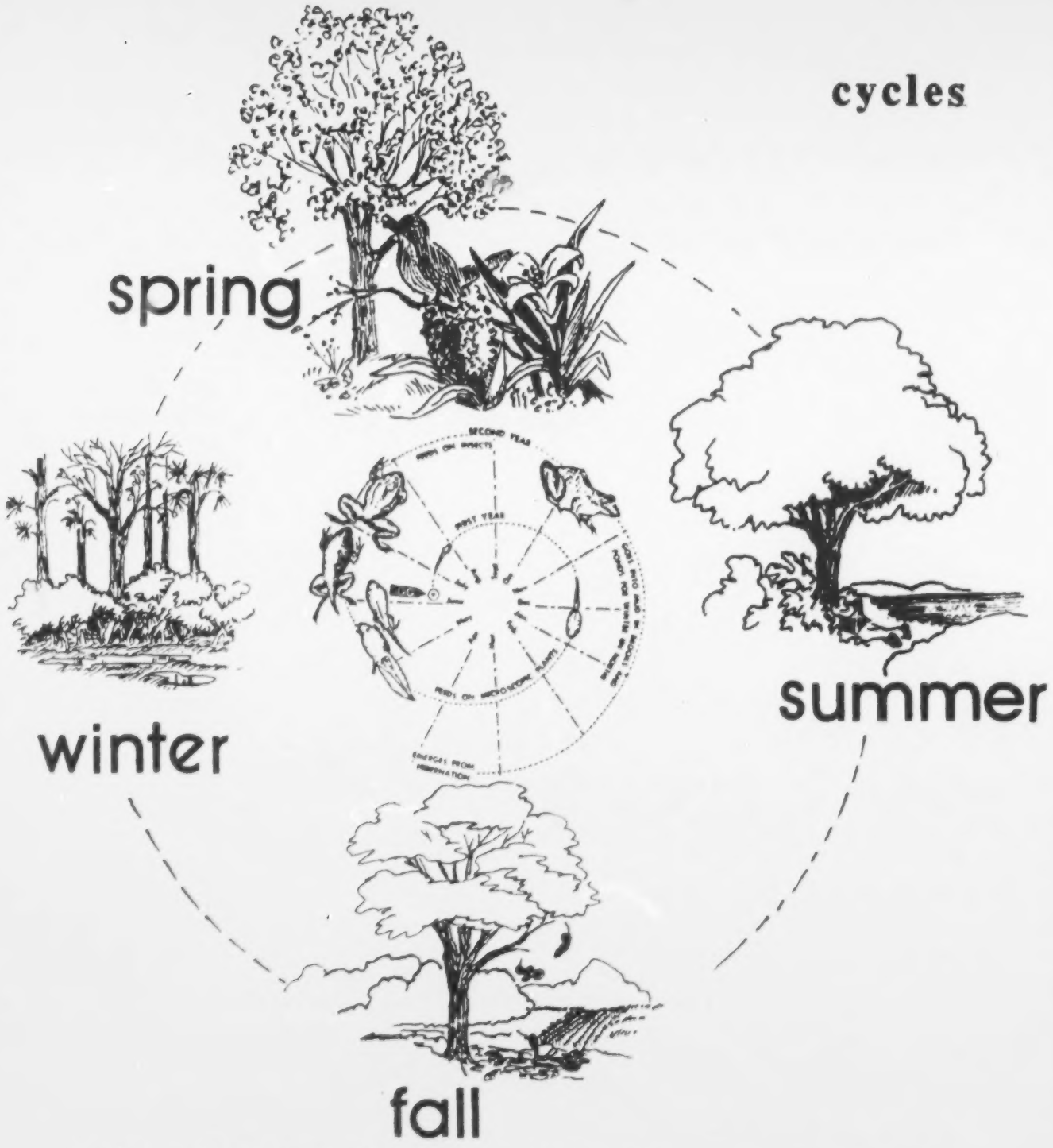
community

community - all of the living plants and animals that are found in a particular place.

*community - an association of organisms--plant and animal--each occupying a certain position or ecological niche, inhabiting a common environment, and interacting with each other; all the plants and animals in a particular habitat that are bound together by food chains and other interrelations.

*Taken from project WILD

cycles



cycles - a sequence of events or stages that occurs over and over again, without beginning and without end and without beginning and without end and without beginning and without end and...

diversity

diversity - a measure of the different kinds of things that are found in an area. Where we have many different kinds of things, we have higher diversity. Diversity tends to maintain stability in the community.

*diversity - variety.

*Taken from project WILD

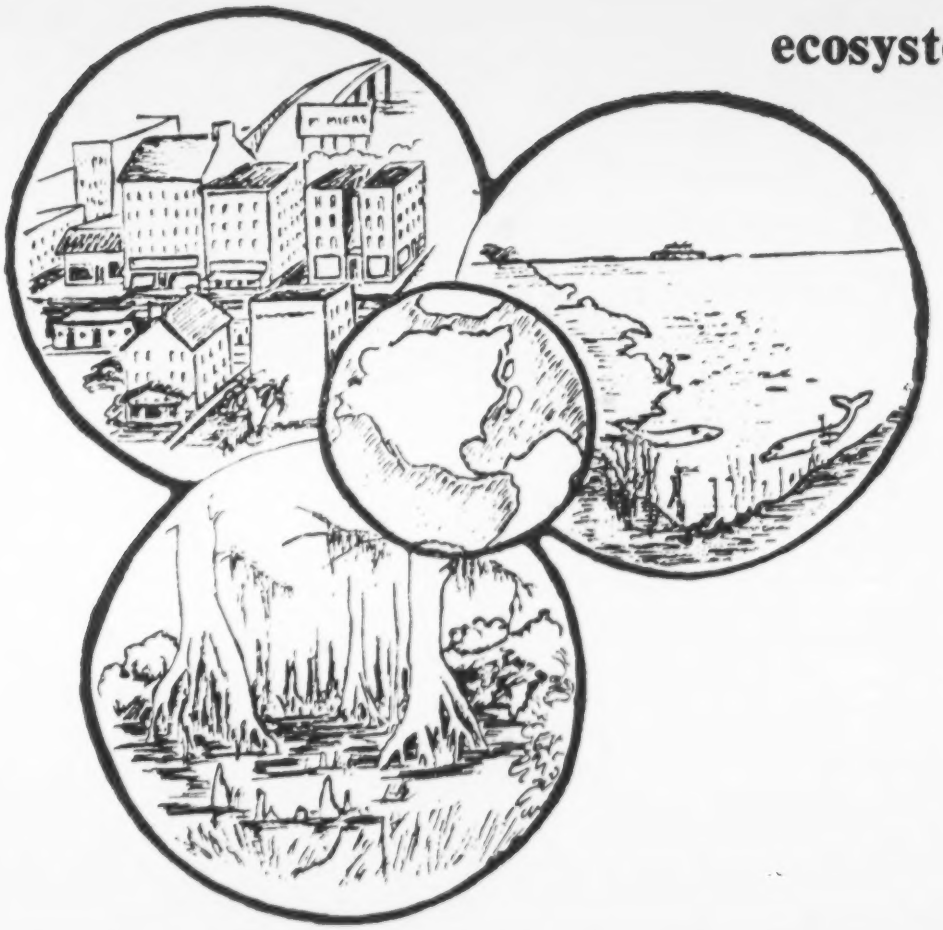
ecology

ecology - the study of the interrelationships of living things to one another and to their environment.

*ecology - the study of the relation of organisms or groups of organisms to their environment; or the science of the interrelations between living organisms and their environment.

*Take from project WILD

ecosystem



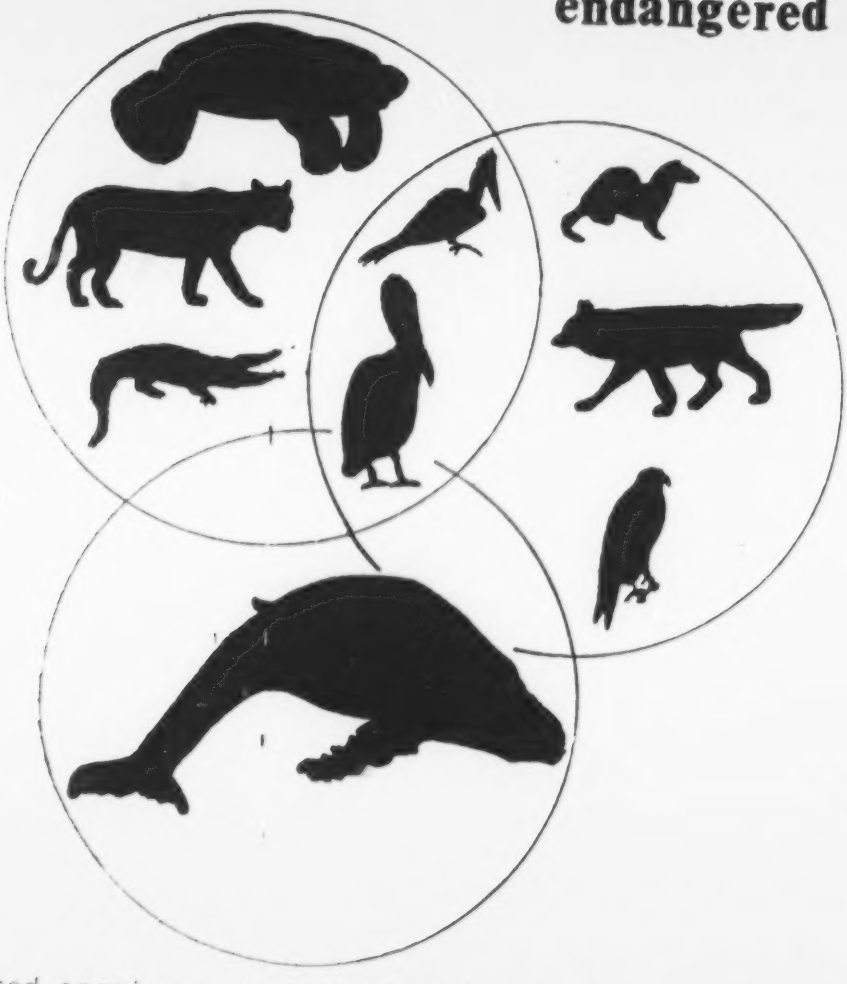
ecosystem - the interaction of living plants and animals and non-living things existing together in an area. Examples are:

- the Caloosahatchee River ecosystem;
- the Everglades ecosystem;
- the bays and beaches that make up a coastal ecosystem.

**ecosystem - a natural unit that includes living and nonliving parts interacting to produce a stable system in which the exchange of materials between the living and nonliving parts follows closed paths; all living things and their environment in an area of any size, with all linked together by energy and nutrient flow.*

**Taken from project WILD*

endangered species

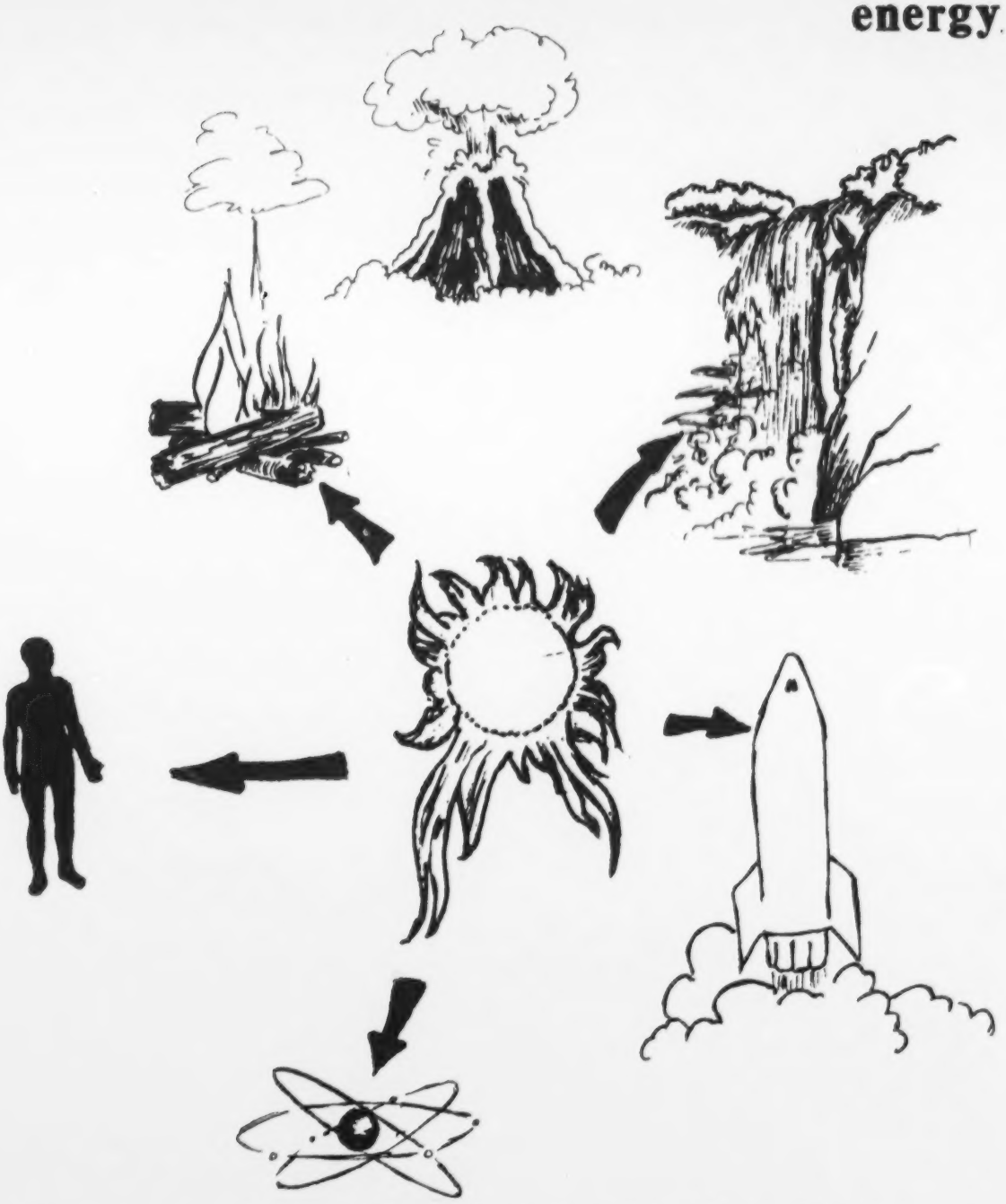


endangered species - a plant or animal that is in danger of becoming extinct when more animals die each year than are born. When all of the animals or plants of a particular kind die, that plant or animal is said to be extinct.

*"endangered species - an "endangered" species is one which is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. (A "threatened" species is one that is likely to become endangered.)

*Taken from project WILD

energy

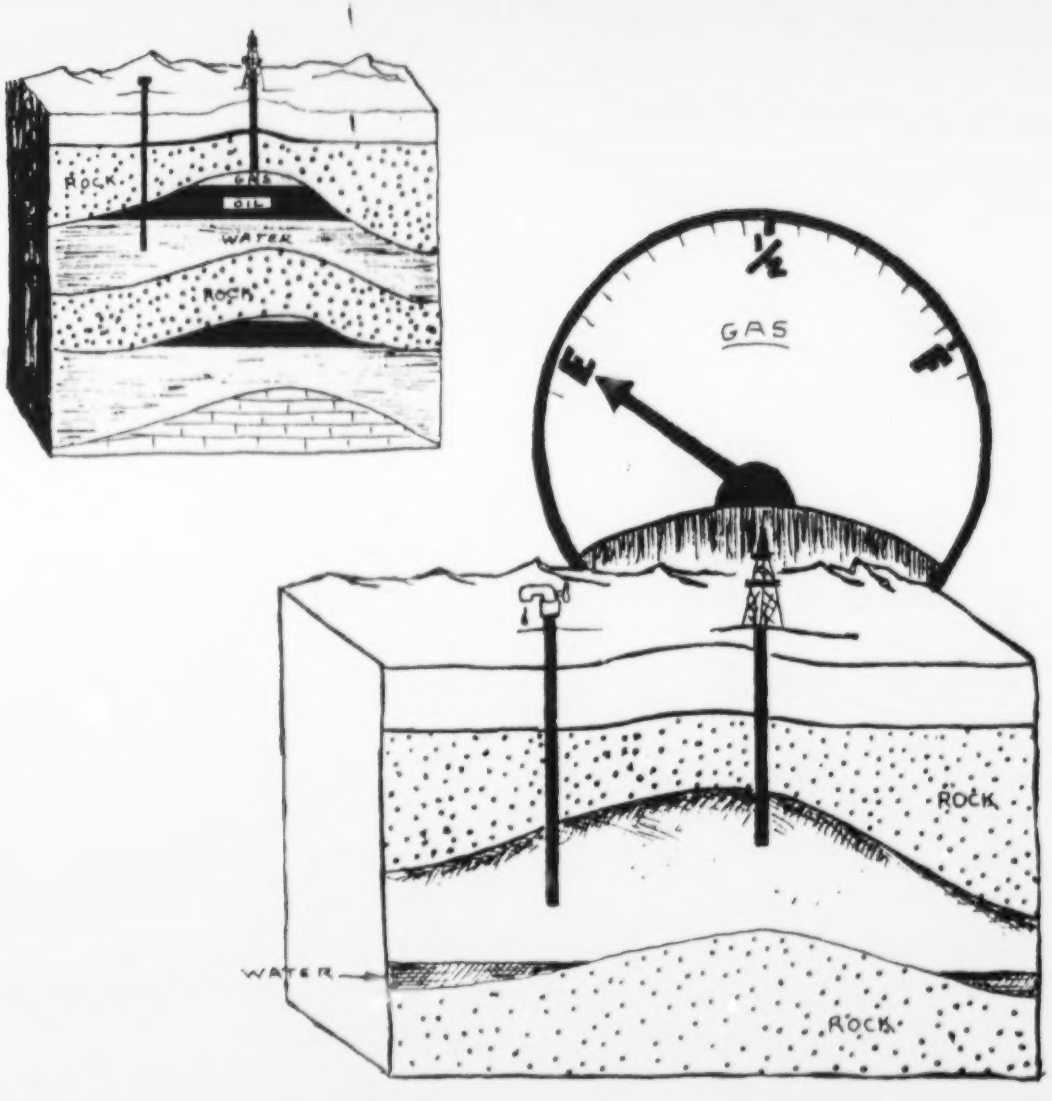


energy - the ability to do work or to make things change. Energy takes on such forms as kinetic, potential, heat, chemical, electrical and nuclear energy. We say that something "has energy" whenever it brings about a change.

estuary

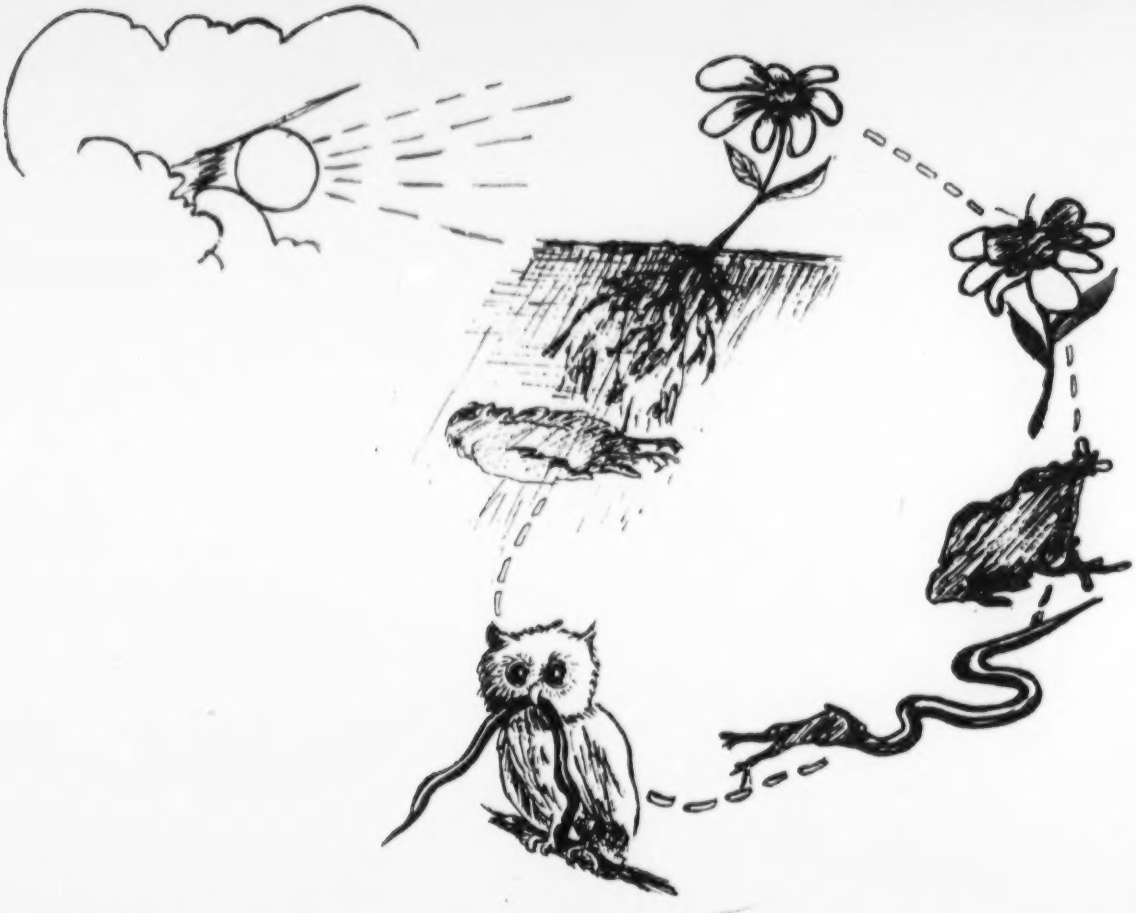
estuary - an area where fresh water and salt water mix, usually at the mouth of a river or bay. Estuaries are one of the richest nursery areas in the world for supporting life. A wide variety of animals lay their eggs and grow their young in and near the estuaries.

finite resources



finite resources - resources, such as water, oil, and natural gas that are limited in supply.

food chain



food chain - a way of describing how the energy from the sun is passed to all living things through the things they eat. Producers use the sun's energy to make their own food. These producers are then eaten by consumers. Animals and fungi cannot make their own food. The consumers die and the decomposers consume the materials and return them to the soil.

**food chain - the transfer of food energy from the source in plants through a series of animals, with repeated eating and being eaten. For example, a green plant, a leaf-eating insect, and an insect-eating bird would form a simple food chain. Any one species is usually represented in several or many food chains.*

**Taken from project WILD*

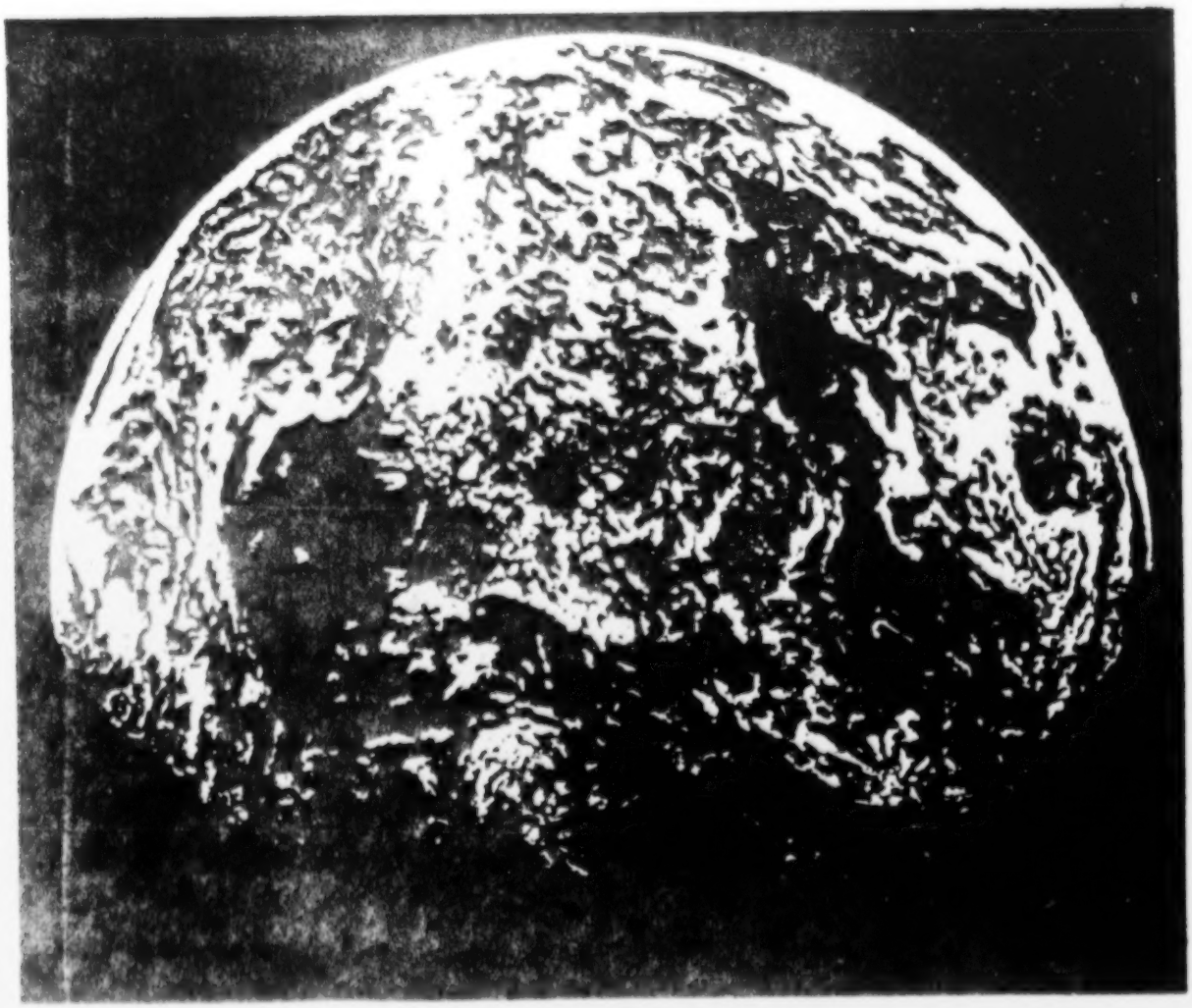
habitat

habitat - the place where a plant or animal lives and can find all of the things it needs to survive.

**habitat - the arrangement of food, water, shelter or cover, and space suitable to animals' needs. It is the "life range" which must include food and water, as well as escape cover, winter cover, cover to rear young, and even cover in which to play.*

**Taken from project WILD*

life



life - one of the hardest words to define. It is often difficult to determine if something is living or non-living. Many non-living things have some of the same properties as living things. Life does not necessarily depend on the make-up of things, but rather is often dependent upon how things are put together. Life can grow, develop, change, and reproduce itself. Life can, for a brief time, bring organized complexity to disorder.

limiting factors

limiting factors - all living things need food, water, and shelter. When any one of these begins to run out, this then becomes the limiting factor for the life of those creatures.

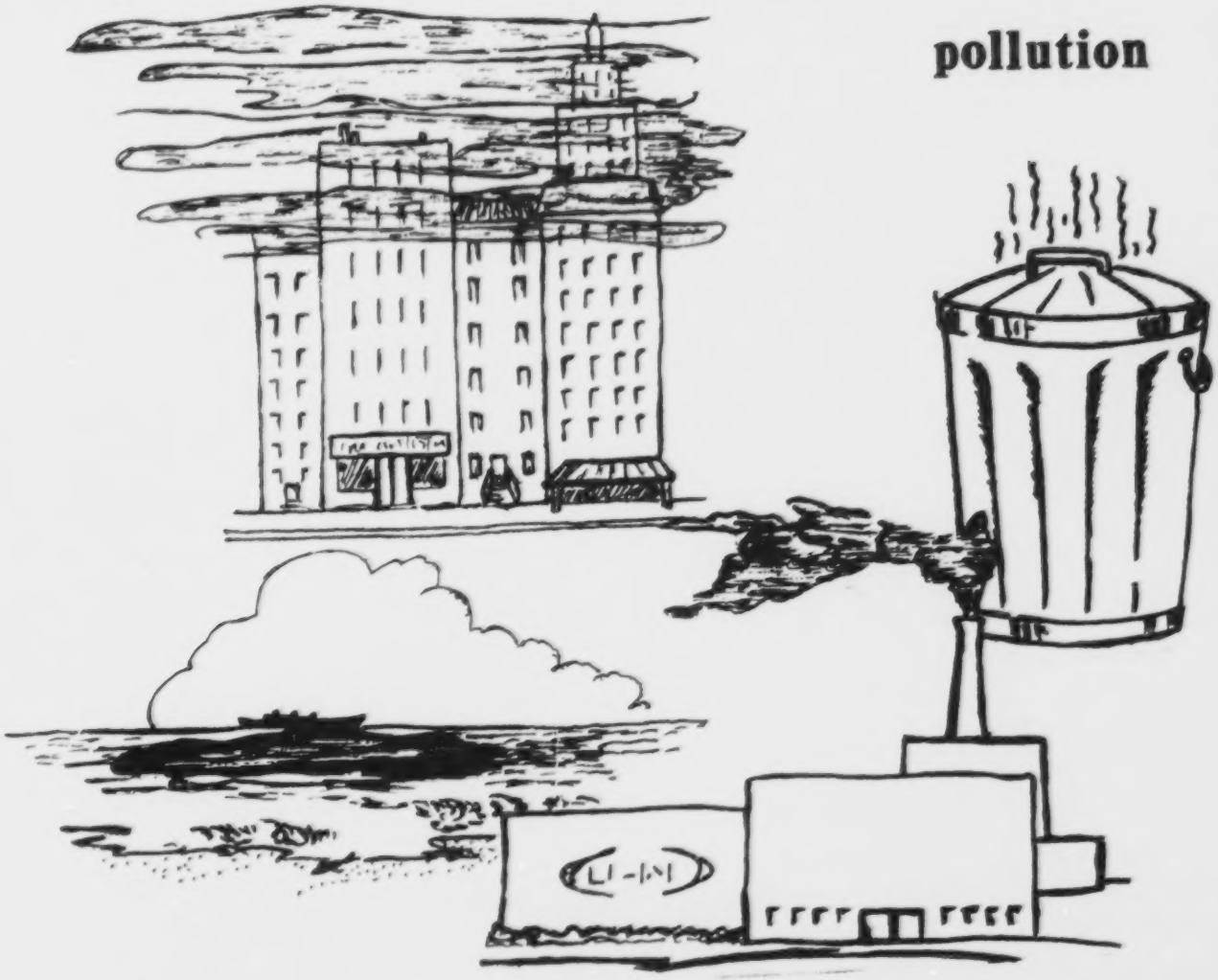
**limiting factor* - *influences in the life history of any animal, population of animals, or species; e.g., food, water, shelter, space, disease, predation, climatic conditions, pollution, hunting, poaching, and accidents. When one or more of these exceeds the limit of tolerance of that animal, population of animals, or species, it then becomes a limiting factor; it then directly affects the well-being of that animal and may result in the animal's death. Limiting factors may result from causes in nature as well as human activities.*

**Taken from project WILD*

natural

natural - a term used by humans to describe anything occurring spontaneously in nature as opposed to something manufactured or changed by humans.

pollution

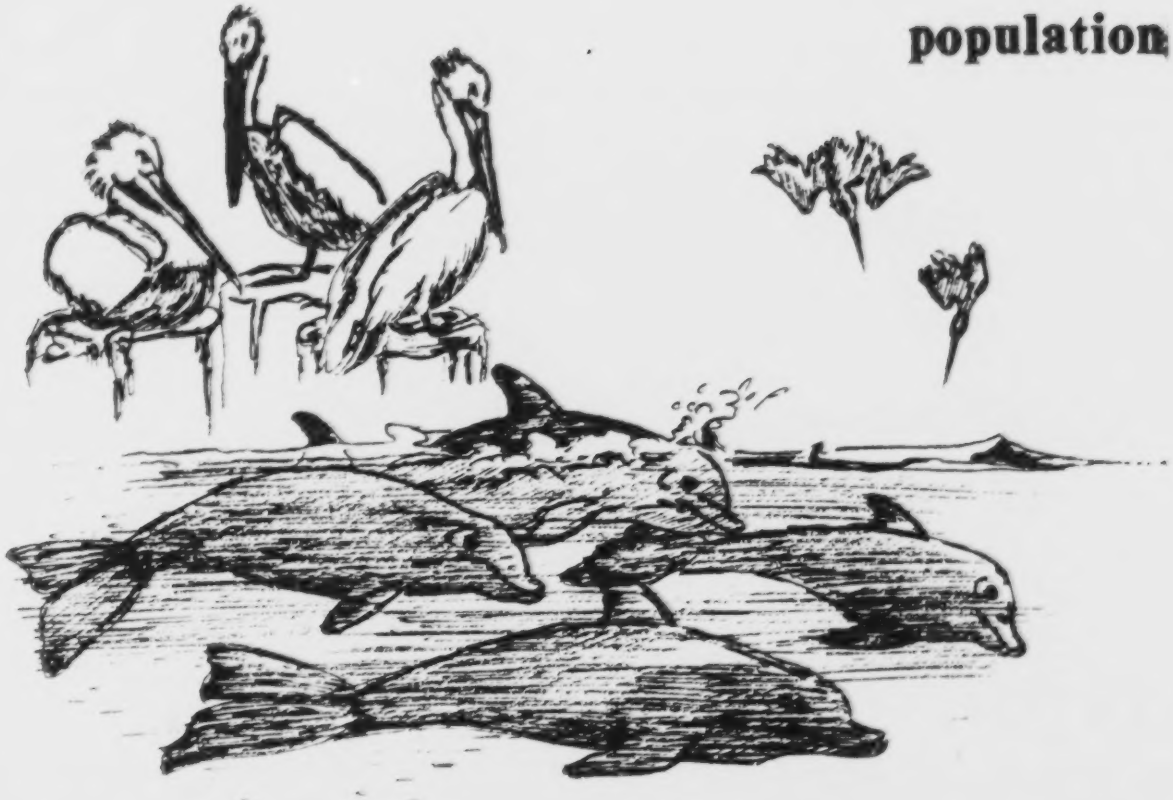


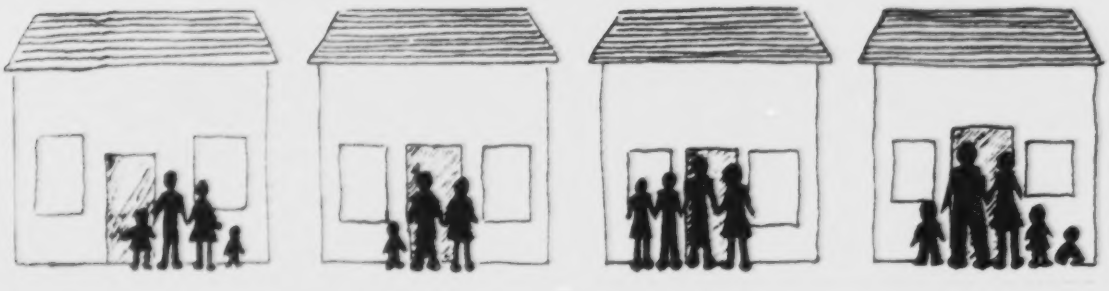
pollution - substances introduced into the environment that are potentially harmful to living organisms or that interfere with human use of the environment. All waste materials brought into the environment that are not degradable or cannot be dispersed or diffused rapidly.

*pollution - *harmful substances deposited in the air or water or land, leading to a state of dirtiness, impurity, unhealthiness, or hazard.*

*Taken from project WILD

population



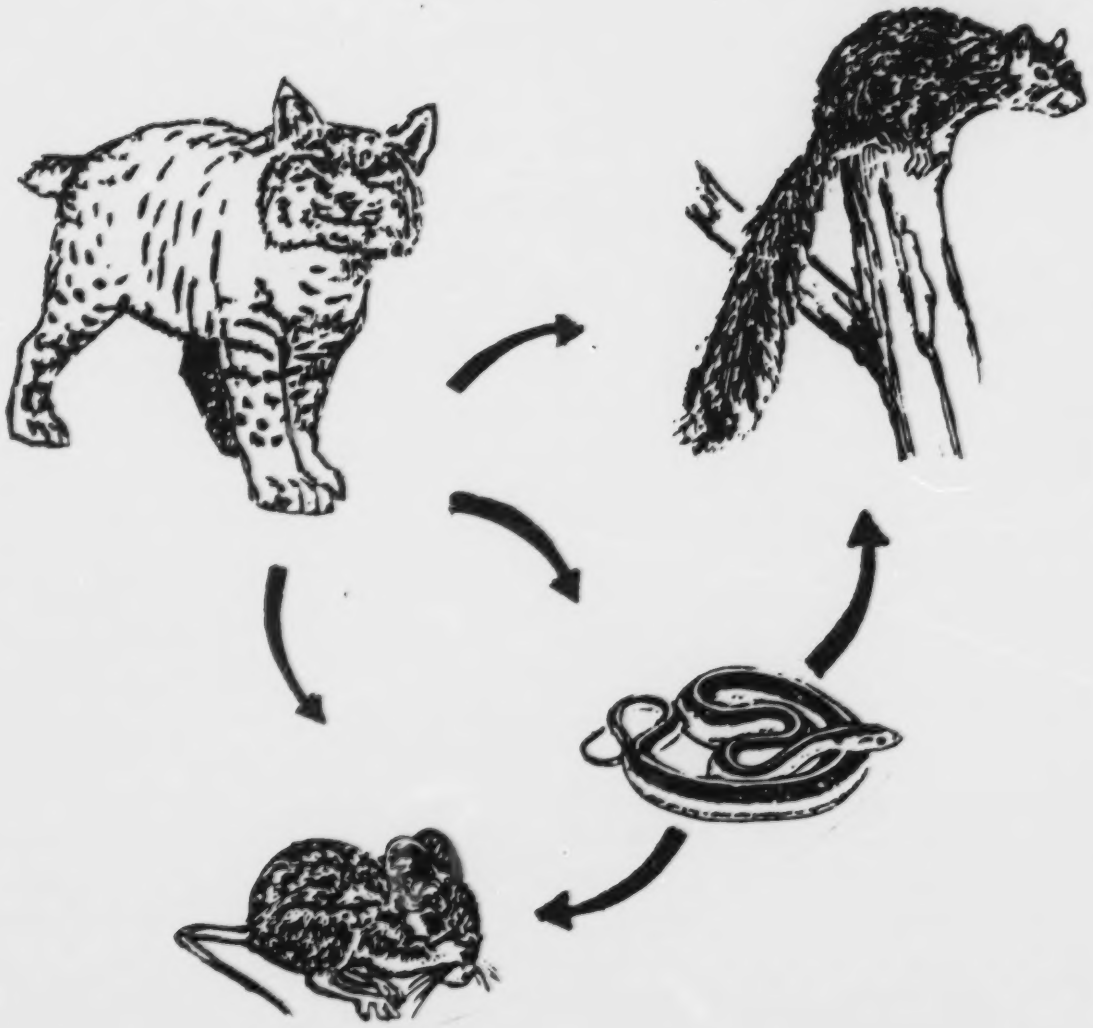


population - the number of a particular kind of plant or animal that lives in a given area.

*"population - the number of a particular species in a defined area.

*Taken from project WILD

predator / prey



predator - an animal that relies upon catching other animals for food.

prey - a predator's food.

**predator - an animal that kills and eats other animals.*

**prey - animals that are killed and eaten by other animals.*

**Taken from project WILD*

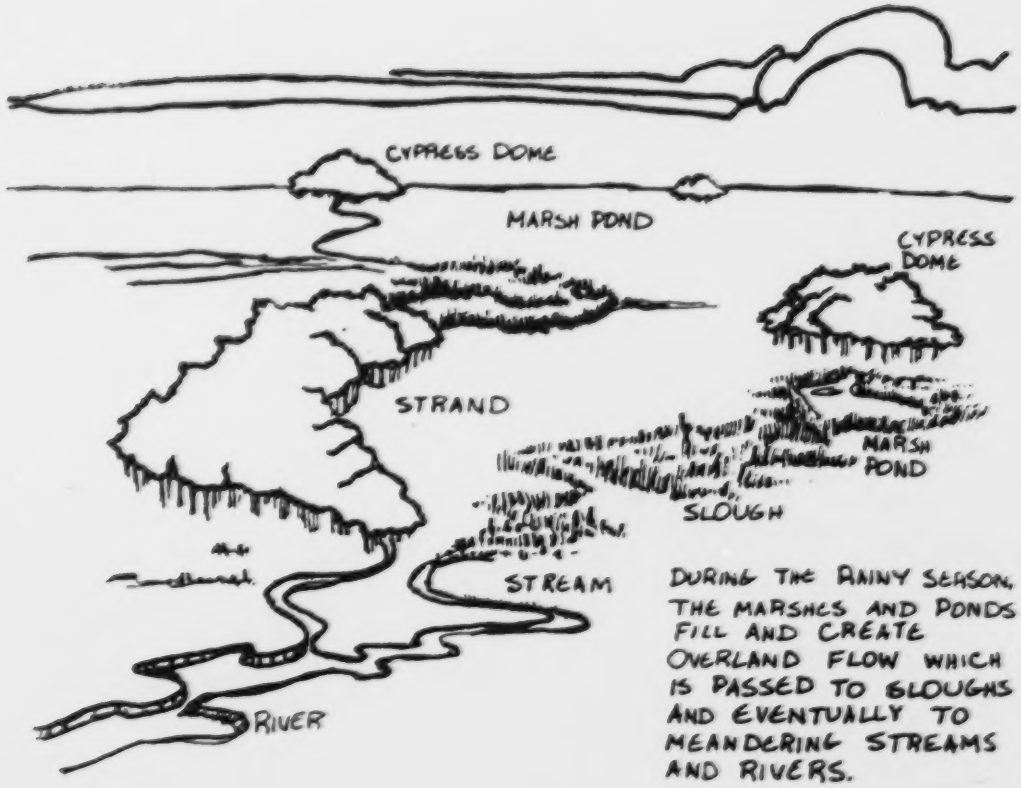
succession

succession - the gradual and predictable replacement of one community by another.

*succession - the orderly, gradual, and continuous replacement of one plant or animal by another.

*Taken from project WILD

wetlands


CYPRESS DOME
MARSH POND
CYPRESS DOME
STRAND
MARSH POND
SLOUGH
STREAM
RIVER
DURING THE RAINY SEASON, THE MARSHES AND PONDS FILL AND CREATE OVERLAND FLOW WHICH IS PASSED TO SLOUGHS AND EVENTUALLY TO MEANDERING STREAMS AND RIVERS.

wetlands - an area of land often underwater for part or all of the year. Cypress swamps, mangrove swamps, wet prairies, and marshes are examples of wetlands.